

Amendments To the Claims:

Please amend the claims as shown. Applicants reserve the right to pursue any cancelled claims at a later date.

1.-16..(cancelled)

17. (new) A system for executing at least one software program which needs to be enabled by a license key, the software program configured for open-loop or closed-loop control when executed by least one automation component, the system comprising:

at least one license key handler for receiving a license key; and

a license key handler manager configured to be connected to and exchange data with each license key handler.

18. (new) The system as claimed in claim 17, wherein the system comprises at least first and second license key handlers, and the license key handler manager is configured to be connected to the at least first and second license key handlers.

19. (new) The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the first and second license key handlers are of different types.

20. (new) The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the license key handler manager is configured to identify the at least first and second license key handlers.

21. (new) The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the license key handler manager is configured to identify a license requirement related to the software program.

22. (new) The system as claimed in claim 17, wherein
the system is a distributed system having at least first and second automation components connected by a data link,

the license key handler is configured to be executed on the first or second automation component,

the software program is configured to be executed on the first automation components, and

the license key handler manager:

is configured to be executed on the first or second automation component, and has a data connection to the license key handler.

23. (new) The system as claimed in claim 17, wherein the license key handler manager and the license key handler form one integrated software program.

24. (new) The system as claimed in claim 17, wherein the system is an automation component having runtime software.

25. (new) A method for enabling the execution of at least one software program which needs to be enabled by via a license key, the method comprising:

providing at least first and second license key handlers of different types for receiving a license key;

connecting the first and second license handlers to a license key handler manager; and identifying at least the first or the second license key handler by the license key handler manager.

26. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

transferring the license key to a license key memory of the identified first or second license key handler by the license key handler manager; and

retrieving the license key from the license key memory by the license key handler, wherein the execution of the software program is enabled by a check of the license key at the identified first or second license key handler using the software program.

27. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

transferring the license key to a license key server license key handler manager; and
transmitting the license key to the identified first or second license key handler by the
license key server, wherein the execution of the software program is enabled by a check of
the license key at the identified first or second license key handler using the software
program.

28. (new) The method as claimed in claim 27, wherein the license key is stored in and
retrieved from a license key memory of the identified first or second license key handler.

29. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:
transferring the license key to the license key handler by the license key handler
manager; and
storing the license key in a license key memory of the identified first or second key
handler, wherein the execution of the software program is enabled by a check of the license
key at the identified first or second license key handler using the software program.

30. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the software program is
executed in an embedded runtime system of an industrial automation or drive system
having at least one automation component.

31. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein at least two software programs
need to be enabled by at least first and second license keys of different types, further
comprising transferring the first license key to the first license key handler, wherein the
first license key and the first license key handler are of the same type.

32. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the license key handler
manager is executed on a personal computer.

33. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the first or second license key handler has a license key memory, and the license key handler manager transfers the license key to the license key memory.

34. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the first or second license handler has a license key memory, and the license key handler stores the license key in the license key memory or reads the license key from the license key memory.

35. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the first and second license key handlers are configured to handle license keys of different types, and the license key handler manager identifies a type of the identified at least first or the second license key handler.

36. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising adding software modules to the license key handler manager for updating the license key handler manager to communicate with a new type of license key handler.

37. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the license key handler manager is provided with the license key over the Internet.